WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:

providing a computer including

a processor and

a memory operably coupled to the processor;

providing a first software program capable of being operably installed on the computer;

providing a second software program

capable of being operably installed on the computer and

capable of being used interoperably with the first software program;

modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program;

digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the specific point in time;

determining whether the second software program has been altered after the digitally signing;

verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and

using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if

the determining determines that the second software program has not been altered after the digitally signing and

the verifying verifies that the specific point in time has not passed.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein
the second software program includes a device information file and
the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising
verifying after the using that the specific point in time has not passed and
blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is an application software program.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is a peripheral driver.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein
the first software program is an application software program and
the second software program is a plug-in.

7. A computer system comprising:
a processor;
a first software program capable of being operably coupled to the processor;
a digitally signed second software program, the second software program
capable of being operably coupled to the processor,
capable of being used interoperably with the first software program, and
including data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program; and
a memory coupled to the processor, the memory including
means for determining whether the second software program has been altered,
means for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed, and
means for using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if
it is determined that the second software program has not been altered and
it is verified that the specific point in time has not passed.

8. The computer system of claim 7, wherein
the second software program includes a device information file and
the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

9. The computer system of claim 7, wherein the memory coupled to the processor further includes
means for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and
means for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

10. The computer system of claim 7, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is an application software program.

11. The computer system of claim 7, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is a peripheral driver.

12. The computer system of claim 7, wherein
the first software program is an application software program and
the second software program is a plug-in.

13. An apparatus for limiting use of a first software program interoperably with a second software program comprising:
means for modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program;
means for digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the specific point in time;
means for determining whether the second software program has been altered after the digitally signing;
means for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and
means for using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if
it is determined that the second software program has not been altered after the digitally signing and
it is verified that the specific point in time has not passed.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:
means for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and
means for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the second software program includes a device information file and
the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

16. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is an application software program.

17. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the first software program is an operating system and
the second software program is a peripheral driver.

18. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the first software program is an application software program and
the second software program is a plug-in.

19. A method comprising:

providing a computer including

a processor and

a memory operably coupled to the processor;

providing an application software program capable of being operably installed on the computer;

providing a plug-in

capable of being operably installed on the computer and

capable of being used interoperably with the application software program;

modifying the plug-in to include a specific set of preconditions limiting use of the plug-in interoperably with the application software program;

digitally signing the plug-in including the specific set of preconditions;

determining whether the plug-in has been altered after the digitally signing;

verifying that the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the plug-in interoperably with the application software program is met; and

using the plug-in interoperably with the application software program if and only if

the determining determines that the plug-in has not been altered after the digitally signing and

the verifying verifies that the specific set of preconditions is met.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the second software program interoperably with the first software program includes data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein
the second software program includes a device information file and
the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

22. The method of claim 19, further comprising
verifying after the using that the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the second software program interoperably with the first software program continues to be met and
blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if any of the specific set of preconditions limiting use are not met.

23. A computer system comprising:
a processor;
a first software program capable of being operably coupled to the processor;
a digitally signed second software program, the second software program
capable of being operably coupled to the processor,
capable of being used interoperably with the first software program, and
including data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program; and
a memory coupled to the processor, the memory including
a circuit for determining whether the second software program has been altered,
a circuit for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed, and
a circuit for using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if
the circuit for determining determines that the second software program has not been altered and
the circuit for verifying verifies that the specific point in time has not passed.

24. The computer system of claim 23, wherein the memory coupled to the processor further includes

a circuit for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and

a circuit for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

25. An apparatus for limiting use of a first software program interoperably with a second software program comprising:

a circuit for modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program;

a circuit for digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the specific point in time;

a circuit for determining whether the second software program has been altered after the digitally signing;

a circuit for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and

a circuit for using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if

the circuit for determining determines that the second software program has not been altered after the digitally signing and

the circuit for verifying verifies that the specific point in time has not passed.

26. The apparatus of claim 25, further comprising:

a circuit for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and

a circuit for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.